

THE PUBLIC VOICE AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS: Community Engagement in Food Action Plans

By
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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Urban Planning, Geography and Atmospheric Sciences and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Date Approved: August 30, 2017

Abstract

This project explores the definitions of sustainable food system planning and how it is approached through the disciplines of Urban Planning and Human Geography. It evaluates an emerging tool in food system planning, the food system action plan, using public participation as a baseline to understand its possible sustainability. Finally, this project seeks to add to the understanding of food system planning tools with primary research using the photovoice technique with members of the Lawrence, KS community.

The food system is intricately tied to *economic* systems, *to social structures or systems* that affect all peoples' ability to access what they need and the systems *of nature and the environment*. The way cities and regions are constructed or planned deeply affect how people get their food. Changing from global to more locally proximate production and consumption, from invisible to visible food producers is part and parcel of a sustainable food practice.

Cities and regions are turning to the planning process to address how communities get their food.

One technique to address food system issues is the creation of food system plans. As an emerging technique, I address whether these food plans support sustainability and how these cities, counties and regions have developed these plans. I evaluate adopted food plans nationwide based on their stated public participation measures, using public participation measures as a way to understand community sustainability. Overall, public participation measures are expanding and maturing nationally, with over half of the food system plans documenting their public participation processes well.

Using a community based research method, photovoice, I engage seven Lawrence KS community members to document how they experience food in their lives. The City of Lawrence has spent 1.5 years research and creating a food system plan. In the planning process, these seven community members were trained as community data gatherers. In this project, they continue that work. They were instructed to critically engage in the food system and their own experiences, using photography and critical captions with the end goal to affect local food policy. The outcome is heightened engagement and understanding among those creating policy and stakeholders experiencing local food policies at the grassroots level.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all members of my thesis committee for their help, guidance and optimism in this project: Chris Brown, Stacey Swearingen-White and Jay Johnson. I would also like to thank the two non-committee members, formerly committee members, who inspired this work and research about food, giving me the assurance that food is life, food is culture and food work is important work: Dr. Kelly Kindscher and Dr. Ward Lyles. You both saw and understood the delicate balance of family, work and school and assured me that I could and should do this.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the community members who reinforced the importance of community-based research. The Sunrise Project, the Douglas County Food Policy Council, the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department, the Lawrence Public Library staff are all community partners in the food system plan development but all groups have taken time to support my work here. Thank you.

I would like to thank Helen Schnoes, Food System Coordinator for Douglas County, for her belief in food system planning. Her work made the Douglas County Food Plan possible and inspired me to use community-based research as a tool to understand food system plans.

Lastly, I thank and acknowledge my family. You've reminded me (time and again) that the short-term sacrifice will have huge long-term benefits. Josh, Mercury and Posey: you three have kept me inspired and optimistic in the face of setbacks. Thank you. Davida and Hal: without my parents and ancestors, I would have no shoulders to stand on or stories to tell.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction: Sustainable Food Systems Planning

“Food is a nexus for industry, rural/urban relations, global trade relations, domestic and social life, biological health, social belonging, celebration of community, paid and unpaid work, expressions of care, abuse of power, hunger strikes, fasts, and prayer. Food is part of daily life at least as much as we are consumers and possibly more as we labor for either love or money. Food and food production are inextricably tied to our ecological systems and survival in the future.” (Welsh and MacRae 1998, p. 242)

Food is central to human life. It holds biological necessity but also cultural meaning and sensual pleasure. But the reality of food is fractured, contingent and tinged with inequity and injustice. People experience barriers to accessing healthy, unprocessed and culturally appropriate food in some areas while others have so much food choice and quantity that much is wasted. The American food system has undergone numerous shifts in the last half century and bears the markers of its agrarian past like a hazy memory. City/town design and land use patterns affect how people get food, who can access food and what sorts of food are available. The food system is intricately tied to *economic* systems, shifts in how and where people make their living and economic expansion/contraction. Food systems are tied to *social structures or systems* that affect all peoples’ ability to access what they need. Food systems are intricately linked to the systems

of nature and the environment. The presence of climate change and shifting weather place increased stress upon farmers and producers world wide. The shift to high volume, high efficiency farming methods globally has had an indelible effect on our ecology and the natural world, with increased fertilizer runoff, increased carbon emissions, and water and soil degradation. Perhaps sustainability can address social injustice, environmental degradation and economic imbalance. However, sustainability is a contested and shifting notion and there is no end to the competing meanings and utilizations. What does sustainability mean within food systems? According to the American Planning Association (2013), sustainability in the food system is intricately linked to the design of the built environment, the economy, access to healthy foods, equity, and resiliency to catastrophic change (*APA Comprehensive Plan Standards for Sustaining Places*, 2013). Gail Feestra (2002), speaking from the position of the Sustainable Agricultural research sector, echoes this and says that sustainable food systems require multiple spaces to flourish: social, political, intellectual and economic. In her sustainable agricultural research position at University of California Davis, she describes their definition of a community food system: “A collaborative effort to build a more locally based, self-reliant food economies- one in which sustainable food production, processing, distribution and consumption is integrated to enhance the economic, environmental and social health of a particular place” (Feenstra, 2002, p. 100).

The sustainable food systems research community is made up of academics and practitioners across a variety of fields; public health, geography, urban design/ architecture, urban planning, indigenous studies, gender and sexuality studies, and economics among others. Though the methods of evaluation and modes of discussion shift, they seek ways to understand how sustainability might look and influence a thriving food system. Most scholars agree that

changing from global to more locally proximate production, from invisible to visible food producers, to more clear internalization of all costs associated with food production and consumption is part and parcel of a sustainable food practice. Kloppenburg (2000) says, “How we eat is now recognized as a major determinant of how natural resources and human labor are used and misused” (2000, p. 178).

The connection of sustainability to embeddedness, scale and the specifics of place are at the center of the reaction against the global food system. These reactions or resurgences include alternative food systems, urban agriculture, community food systems, local food systems which are all umbrellas under which CSAs, farmers’ markets, food hubs, community gardens, local food farming initiatives and food policy councils live. Feagan (2007) calls this move “relocalization” but cautions that “...advocacy around reconfiguring the ‘place of food’ would benefit from a deeper engagement with the geographical concepts inherent in these entreaties” (Feagan, 2007, p. 24).

Notably, geography and urban planning come together to address this scale issue of global versus local, cautioning the easy binaries of “buy local” campaigns. In *Avoiding the Local Trap*, Born and Purcell (2006) point out that there are no assumptions to be made about the moral outcomes of a local food system. Instead, global and local food systems offer different outcomes and scales at which to consider food but are not inherently good or bad. Instead of the local scale representing only a good moral outcome for the folks on the ground, the process of placemaking and sustainability science offers up an intersection of geography and urban planning in urban paces as a method of engaging more with a specific place (Marsden 2013). The importance of the specific place, recognized by Marsden (2013) and Kates (2000), allows for special embeddedness which privileges the unique experiences of a unique place. This

embedded knowledge is what strengthens and solidifies sustainable projects. Kates (2000) notes that the “grand query of sustainability will be these scale relationships”, but goes on to point out that sustainability research will take place “...around the study of interactions between development and environment in particular places” (Kates, 2000, p. 2).

The site where these ideas become action is in municipal government. Urban planning, as a profession, focuses itself on the urban and regional scale, looking at built environment/ land use, transportation systems, energy systems, housing and more. In urban planning, the comprehensive plan is the tool that allows a specific area, city, town or region to define itself. It can both narrowly describe land uses, transportation and economic plans and also broadly set-forth community goals. It can both place limits and enunciate visions for the future. Different sectors of a city utilize different sorts of plans, from parks or open spaces to neighborhood specific to bike and pedestrian plans. Food plans are a newly developed planning tool, putting food systems next to transportation, housing, community health and land use plans. Food plans began as a paragraph then a chapter in comprehensive plans across the country in the early ‘00s. Many early food plans were placed within public health plans or sustainability plans. In some cases, nascent food plans lived within urban agriculture plans. The sustainability plans themselves came about in response to a growing understanding of human-affected environmental change and that cities must meaningfully respond. In many ways, food plans are developing for similar reasons.

Using adopted food plans from around the country, I compare them based on their source, the city or region from which they come and some demography to get baseline comparisons. Next, using accepted planning criteria, I address the questions of whether these food plans support sustainability and how these cities, counties and regions developed these plans. With the

growth of comprehensive planning and the mandate to plan in many places, how can we distinguish strong plans from weak plans? Practitioners and planners will often say that the best plan is the plan that is read, referenced and used frequently. One of the ways that municipalities have chosen to make plans stronger is to require and use public participation or community engagement. Therefore, using public participation evaluation measures put forth by Burby (2003), Brody, Godschalk and Burby (2003) and Baer (1997), I compare food action plans nationally, creating a simple ranking. This measure gives beginning baseline and best practices for comparing food system action plans.

This identification and ranking of participatory methods or community engagement will inform the second part of the thesis, the site-specific participatory research project. Using human geography's participatory research methods as a guide, I utilize the photovoice method for a community-based research project. Rachel Pain (2004) points out the history in participatory research methods dating from the 1970s. She also points out that "...participatory approaches lend themselves to research where people's relations with and accounts of space, place and environment are of central interest" (Pain, 2004, p. 653). Clearly, this intersects with food system sustainability. This photovoice technique is seldom-used and not mentioned in any food plans; it is a technique that has roots in public health, planning and geography research. First developed and named by Wang and Burris (1997) as a technique to address public health issues, this technique has proved useful to the examination of social and community issues. It uses feminist theory, the notion that participants subjective experience is valuable and unique, and Friere's critical consciousness theory, the belief that we are all affected by a number of social systems and must seek to become aware of their effects. Photovoice has been used in a broad variety of public health issues that intersect with social and economic issues. The Denver-based *Huger*

Free Colorado produced a project and toolkit to address hunger with the photovoice technique, which is the basis of the process I used in my research. I identify, based on my research project findings and the process of photovoice, whether this technique may produce valuable, helpful public information, may be moderately helpful or is not useful in the development of food action plans.

The photovoice process is uniquely suited to the food planning process in Lawrence Kansas (Douglas County). I became involved with the creation of the food system plan when I agreed to gather, manage and analyze data for the food system planning process. The county-led process included multiple community engagement techniques ranging from well-established to experimental. We utilized public informational meetings, multiple community small group meetings, surveys, focus groups and then more experimental methods. Using community partners, the county enlisted members of under-served Lawrence/ Douglas County communities to go to their friends, neighbors, clubs and workplaces to gather qualitative data, i.e. stories, about their experiences with food. Using this extensive amount information gathered, the planning process became richer, more nuanced and reflective of the experiences of the whole community. Witnessing the community engagement with qualitative methods, inspired me to look more deeply for other methods that had not been tried locally or with food system issues. Photovoice is unique because it “passes the microphone” so to speak. The ideas underpinning photovoice are to amplify the lived experiences of marginalized and under-served communities. I could not ignore the coincidence of having seven recently trained community information gatherers ready and willing to undertake the photovoice process. Nor could I ignore the real possibility that this technique might illuminate unseen aspects of the food system and offer new research into community engagement techniques in municipal planning.

Chapter 2:

Food Systems in Urban Planning

There is evidence that food has always been within the planning purview. However, only since the late 1990s have urban planners titled that work ‘food planning’ or food systems planning. Even though food availability has always been a foremost necessity for city life, food has only recently been understood as within a city’s control. Throughout American colonial history, food and agriculture was topmost in citizens’ minds. Historically, agriculture by colonists was at the center of early city planning, as food was central to survival. Vitiello and Brinkley (2014) say, “Early settlements’ “food sheds” (a term coined in the 1920s) were “semi-closed” or mainly local, for basic reasons of colonists’ survival. Food and agriculture were also the basis for many colonies’ expansion” (2014, p. 92). Early food systems existed to minimize the amount of starvation among settlers, build upon modest successes and were wrapped into basic city functions. However, Vitiello and Brinkley (2014) also cite colonists’ “neo-European” vision for the new country’s landscape, which aimed to turn the New World into familiar European-type agricultural landscapes, for basic survival but also to draw new colonists to their settlements. In true European fashion, the New England colonies’ land plans were steeped in English agricultural traditions, accentuating the ties between peri-urban farmsteads and the city (Vitiello and Brinkley, 2014, p. 93).

Planning has only recently theorized food systems separately from land use, transportation, community health and economic development. Vitiello and Brinkley (2014) point to the rapid industrialization and urbanization that occurred with the industrial revolution as the

main contributor toward “...discontinuity in American food system planning “ (2014, p. 92). This discontinuity is commonly called the industrial food system and began developing along with industrial cities. In the late 19th and early 20th century, production and distribution of food became separated from consumption and purchase of food. Land use planning separated agriculture from the cities, removing producing farms from urban areas. Land use planners focused on supply chain design. As consumers, city dwellers were now factory employees and office workers. They had to purchase their food. The resulting food system became “dispersed and industrialized” (Vitiello and Brinkley, 2014, p. 93). While there were still inklings of urban agriculture, like the greenbelts of Ebenezer Howard or Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr’s plans for putting producing farms on vacant city lots, these were eventually deemed too intrusive on so-called civilized developments.

Vitiello and Brinkley tell of rural struggles, largely unrecognized in planning history, for food autonomy within the African-American communities of the early twentieth century. They included numerous civic organizations intended to “build land and food sovereignty among African Americans” (Vitiello and Brinkley, 2014, p. 103). This network of organizations is cited by sociologist Monica White, by Vitiello and Brinkley, as foundational to civil-rights food justice movements (2014, p. 103). This movement was largely hidden, emphasize Vitiello and Brinkley (2014), as planners themselves ceded food planning to business interests and companies, as well as federal institutions like the USDA and rural extension services (Vitiello and Brinkley, 2014, p. 104).

Hidden, also, were the original food producers, the farmers, while the distributors and the value-added food producers come to the forefront. Food system planning became a task that was under many umbrellas including the food industry, grocery store chains and the like. Food

system planning was a task performed mostly by the value-added producers and distribution sides of the food system. Public health and community “economic development institutions” still participated in food planning, as it related to poverty and food access (Vitiello and Brinkley, 2014, p. 92). Municipal planning for food in the early and mid twentieth century was mainly about farmland preservation, city zoning and transportation networks to enhance the efficiency with which urban dwellers accessed food (Vitiello and Brinkley, 2014, p. 101). The bulk of food planning was left to the commercial sector.

However, with the rise of environmental and climate concerns, public health issues and urban land tensions, food systems have moved into the purview of planning again. New mapping processes, new urban design movements, the focus on mixed use spaces and the desire to revivify urban centers have all contributed to food’s rising importance in planning. Food justice and food equity are driving many new food movements within cities and regions. As well, the general instability of global food markets, because of economic and environmental stressors, has led to the importance of food security in food planning.

The field of urban planning prides itself on being “comprehensive, future-oriented and public-interest driven” according to Pothukuchi and Kaufman (2000) in their seminal document, “The Food System: A Stranger to the Planning Field” (2000, p. 113). However, the food system and looking at food from a systems-view is relatively new to city and regional planning. Pothukuchi and Kauffman are seen as the first contemporary planners to really dive into food systems and issue a call for attention to this foundational issue. Using a survey of 22 planning agencies, they pulled apart the main issues that prevented food systems from being squarely inside the planner’s purview. Reasons included:

- “It’s not our turf”- planning is physical and addresses the built environment, and food is a social issue.
- It’s a rural issue, not an urban issue.
- The food system is driven by the market- it’s invested in by the private market, why should we (the municipal government) invest? (Pothukuchi and Kaufman 2000, p. 116).

In the 15 years since this article was published and praised, most planning agencies of any size have acknowledged the necessity of including food systems into their work in planning for public health, equity, and justice. In 2007, the American Planning Association (APA) adopted the APA Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning. It outlined the importance of food in city planning using a systems understanding of how food affects the many aspects of urban life. Among these, preservation of farmland in peri-urban settings is foremost. The APA write that they understand the environmental effects of agriculture on water systems, and that food system activities take up “significant amount of urban and regional land”. As well, they recognize that access to healthy food is a problem and urban agriculture provides a response. So now food planning has entered, officially, into the fore of metropolitan and regional planning.

The current state of food planning enjoins the arenas of food access, the built environment and land use/growth management within and around urban centers. Hodgson’s 2012 APA publication *Planning for Food Access and Community Based Food Systems* lays out a systems-based approach for planners to ensure that food is included with water, transportation, land use, economy and energy. This broad approach highlights planning’s interdisciplinary view

of food presently, including public health and nutrition, architecture and community development (Hodgson, 2012, p. 18). As well, Hodgson (2012) highlights the importance of systems thinking to understanding municipal failures/stressors, “Akin to other systems, food-system sectors are interconnected, and failures in the food system express themselves as problems across all sectors. For this reason, failures in food production, processing, and distribution strain other sectors such as food access, and make it difficult to pinpoint a single cause of any given food system failure” (Hodgson, 2012, p. 15). As well, Hodgson (2012) and other planners have entreated the planning community to consider that food systems are site specific and community-based (Raja et al. 2008, American Dietetic Association et al. 2010). Hodgson (2012) lays out the four principles of community food systems: place based, ecologically sound, economically productive and socially cohesive (2012, p. 18).

While the idea of a community-based food system feels correct, meaningful and logical, the rhetoric of local food over all other food scales is problematic. This idea of scale begs the question of whether a local food system is inherently better than any other possible scale of food system. This argument that the local scale trumped all other scales of production began to gain popularity in the 1990s, with many movements arising that supported this premise, like alternative food systems. However, quickly research arose that countered the assumption that locally produced food was the best way to address consolidating and commercial food production. The work done by Purcell and Brown (2005) and Born and Purcell (2006), calling this line of thinking “the local trap”, seeks to lay the argument between local versus global scale food systems to rest. Explaining the local trap, Born and Purcell (2006) say “evidence suggests that in some cases, local-scale food systems produce one outcome (e.g. greater democracy), and in other cases they produce very different outcomes (e.g., oligarchy). The local trap, therefore

can seduce planners with an incorrect assumption. Second the local trap conflates the scale of a food system with desired outcomes” (Born & Purcell, 2006, p. 196). They remind us that, geographically, “we can never equate a scalar strategy with a particular set of outcomes” (Born & Purcell, 2006, p. 196). Local is not inherently better and does not convey the social meanings conferred upon it. Instead, this argument enjoins planners to look to actual mechanisms within the system for the desired social outcomes (food access, food equity, food justice). When looking at food planning outcomes and techniques, the scale is simply the means to the ends not the ends themselves.

Discussion and research, thankfully, has moved from the dichotomous local vs global argument to more nuanced discussions of food systems that can sustain communities, individuals, economies and the natural environment. Alison Blay-Palmer in her edited book *Imagining Sustainable Food Systems* (2010) begins to pull apart the conflicted nature of food systems and sustainability throughout a number of disciplines including public policy, sociology, geography, economics and urban planning. She begins with the modern industrial food system. Our modern system is in a moment of global consolidation. It is markedly more globally dependent for imports but also “a clear trend in all parts of the food system is great concentration of ownership, which means that decisions affecting communities are increasingly made by absentee business owners” (APA Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning, 2007). Blay-Palmer (2010) confirms the APA’s position and outlines four structures at the heart of these food systems conflicts:

1. The increasing consolidation of corporate interests;
2. Underinvestment in grounded, scale appropriate agricultural research for developing countries;

3. Demand side pressures on food supplies from declining food reserves, increasing meat consumption and biofuel use;
4. Supply side pressures stemming from poor harvests arguably linked to climate change; and, the emergence of food commodities as a source of international speculative investment (Clapp and Cohen 2009, IAASTD 2008, Friedmann 1993a)” (Blay-Palmer, 2010, p. 3).

She calls for a broader revision of the food system than the APA. She uses Friedmann’s important work on food regimes as a way to address the global versus local “discord” that has arisen in the wake of the globalized and consolidated corporate food system (Blay-Palmer, 2010, p. 4). For Blay-Palmer (2010), in order to ensure public access to healthy food, public policy must be driven by food policy makers not industrial food corporations. She says, “Food policy shows promise as a more inclusive foundation for new food relationships giving marginalized participants in the global food system voice through consumer and urban communities...” (Blay-Palmer, 2010, p. 6). So the APA and Blay-Palmer may differ in extent but both see that municipal food policy can be a driver for social change and food justice.

Wayne Roberts, food system scholar, urban planner and manager of the venerable Toronto Food Policy Council for a decade, says of his position that he is “...the most accountable employee in Toronto: accountable to a citizen body, the civil service and elected officials” (Roberts, 2010, p. 174). But what has this to do with sustainability? He says, “This standard of accountability is just one of the many unique and high-performance contributions that food councils make to sustainability, and corresponds to the triple bottom line- of economic, environmental and social accountability- of organizations breaking trail in the journey to sustainability” (Roberts, 2010, p. 174). Roberts and the food policy council present a site-

specific, but not scalar exclusive, method to join food policy and the community needs. Roberts reiterates the places where sustainability happens—with the public, in an engaged forum—in order to create public policy that answers to the specific community-based needs. This also reinforces that most plans should and do spring from the Food Policy Council (FPC), a representative and accountable body, that recommends policy. FPCs are also subject to and the site for public and policy interaction, being driven both by municipal officials and also the food sector each member represents.

Sustainability and Sustainable Place-Making

Sustainable food systems studies are inherently interdisciplinary because the call for sustainability is so wide-ranging, as are the understandings of sustainability. In order to look at food plans, also called food system plans and food action plans, sustainability must be understood within urban planning and public policy fields, but sustainability has a strongly geographic identity. Not only is the sustainable nature of something (food systems in this case) site specific, but sustainable food systems are reflections of the connections of humans to their environments and their ideas of place. To begin, sustainable food systems have been defined as the opposite of corporate industrial food systems; “relational, proximate, diverse, ecologically sustainable, economically sustaining, just/ethical, knowledgeable/communicative, seasonal/temporal, healthful, participatory, culturally nourishing and sustainably regulated” (Kloppenburger et al, 2000, p. 181). This list and others like it (Feenstra 2002, Feagan 2007, Marsden 2013), reiterate the social, economic and environmental connections required of sustainability.

Claire Hinrichs (2010) says of sustainable food systems, the term “is fairly thin gruel” (2010, p.17), meaning that so many definitions are unsatisfying, vague or broad. She suggests

iterative engagement with the term and rather than attempting a static definition, allowing it to take many forms, acknowledging the tensions that persist between the forms. To combat the tendency for sustainability to become another top-down set of procedures, Hinrichs (2010) also calls upon policy and the public forum to create a “fuller instrument for sustainability” (2010, p. 25). It is the food policy councils and the other public fora that present a meaningful public engagement strategy to include those divergent voices in the creation of this public good.

Hinrichs (2010), describing what is wrong with the industrial food system, calls it “outsized, standardized, environmentally degrading, wasteful, unjust, unhealthy, placeless, disempowering – these are a few of the tags that the industrialized, globalized food system invites” (2010, p. 18). Hinrichs (2010) makes the point that food is the perfect entry into sustainability because it calls upon environmental, social and economic concerns (2010, p.19). Hinrichs supports the work of Brown, Born and Purcell’s local trap thinking by pointing out that in the development of alternatives to globalized and corporate food systems, we may not be examining the rhetoric. This rhetoric “resorts to stark, easy binaries such as global vs local (Hinrichs 2003) or conventional vs alternative (Maye, Holloway and Kneafsey 2007) that ultimately caricaturize the settings and actors in food system struggles and politics.... The picture above misses important temporal and spatial aspects of food system change” (Hinrichs, 2010, p. 18).

Robert Kates (2000) has been instrumental in developing sustainability science as an avenue to “generate new knowledge” about how to both meet human needs and maintain environmental systems (2000, p. 1). He says that sustainability includes “supporting human needs, maintaining the environments and moving towards sustainable human consumption patterns” (Kates, 2000, p. 2). He defines sustainability science as the study of human systems

and institutions and also the ecological systems upon which humans depend and affect. It will be place-based and integrative (Kates, 2000, p. 2). Kates (2000) says sustainability will require the crossing of traditional disciplinary boundaries to get at the places where environment and development overlap. The way to understand sustainability into the future will be at those interaction sites, not in the “particular disciplines or sectors” themselves (Kates, 2000, p. 2). Kates (2000) calls on the food policy councils and sustainability researchers for science that addresses problems beyond sector boundaries and very specifically looks at the place(s) where problems occur. These intersection sites, these areas of the overlap of disciplines, are the areas where sustainability and sustainable placemaking come to light.

The work of placing sustainability (geographically) seems to be a key to giving meaning to the term beyond jargon. Terry Marsden (2012) defines sustainability science as covering a range of scales, includes a temporal scale, addresses the complexity of multiple stressors, and recognizes “a range of public and epistemic behaviors and outlooks that equate to integrating usable knowledge in both science and society” (2012, p. 213). He then looks to connect human geography, urban planning and sustainability science through the “agenda of placemaking” (Marsden, 2012, p. 214). Marsden (2012) sees that this sustainability science is lacking unless it “is to embrace concepts of contingent and contested ‘placemaking’” (2012, p. 214). He calls for planning and geography to use the paradigm of sustainable placemaking so that “a more ‘emplaced’ (see Gieryn 2000) and engaging sustainability science may develop” (Marsden, 2012, p. 214).

Sustainability discussions are frequently stymied at the “three-legged stool” metaphor-level; the three legs being environment, economy and society. Marsden (2012), however, sees that the act of placing sustainability and these three spheres in one geographic place allows for

deeper understanding of how place affects/creates people and how people then affect and create places, both ecologically and socially. He says, "...it is becoming much clearer that any effective adaptations to environmental and resource vulnerabilities will need to be inherently 'place based'" (Marsden, 2012, p. 215). As well, "places are then expressions of the varied interactions between these three interconnected and interrelated spheres. They are not necessarily dominated by the logic of one sphere" (Marsden, 2012, p. 215). Place, according to Marsden (2012), is both fluid and relational, speaking to the importance but not exclusivity of the term 'local' in enlacing sustainable food systems (2012, p. 215).

Feagan (2007) uses the term local food system to identify the burgeoning movement as one towards sustainability and away from globalized, industrial food. He says, "The relocalization orientation of LFS movements is partly derivative of early sustainability directives calling for decentralization, democratization, self-sufficiency and subsidiarity – all spatially referenced concepts" (Feagan, 2007, p. 24). Essentially, Feagan is using the term local to contrast the alternative food movement (called local food systems, alternative food systems, sustainable food systems, food sovereignty among others) to the globalization of our present food system and to reconnect food systems work to the specificities of people in place and geography. He, with other geographers, examine (local) food systems in light of sustainable place-making, critically enjoining local as a nuanced boundary around the topic of food systems. Feagan (2007) says, "The recent and contemporary deliberations on concepts of 'place', 'community', and the 'local' in geographical and sociological literature emphasizes their 'multiple and conflicting meanings' (Allen et al., 2003: 63) and this yields some appropriate and necessary considerations for the progressive work of LFS activists and scholars" (2007, p. 24).

Gail Feenstra (2002) provides her from-the-field, sustainable agriculture and interdisciplinary perspective on sustainable food systems as real, practical and at the same time conceptually rich. The alternative systems called sustainable food systems (SFS), she says, are “...more economically viable for a larger percentage of community members, and more socially, culturally, and spiritually healthful” (Feenstra, 2002, p. 100). As well, they are spatially direct, connecting consumers and producers more clearly. Economically, they re-visualize labor and laborers. Finally, Feenstra (2002) says “...they tend to be place-based, drawing on the unique attributes of a particular bioregion and its population to define and support themselves” (2002, p. 100). Importantly, she calls for the creation and protection of four kinds of space. On the ground, she sees that developments in SFS occur in social, political, intellectual and economic spaces. Importantly, she echoes Hinrichs’ call for public fora and food policy councils as the site of place-based food initiatives. Feenstra (2002) sees local food policy councils as the site of community engagement with food security, inherently site-specific and engaged in the development of sustainable food systems.

Chapter 3:

The Tool: The Food Plans

To answer the questions of what a food plan does, how or if it supports sustainability, one must turn to the plans themselves. This plan evaluation limits the field to plans in the United States only. While there are a plenty of food plans in Canada, and Toronto was among the first cities to create a food action plan, the evaluatory methods stem from the American city-state organization and from the Urban Planning academic framework taught and certified in the

United States. It is imperative to understand that food plans are site specific. They speak to the city, town or region for which they are created. They look different in every place they are created. Because this is a relatively new tool, there are not many to look at. The total number of standalone, adopted plans available to evaluate is 24. When looking at a broad cross section of the country to search for food system plans, it becomes clear that there are a few varieties.

Food plans exist at different scales or levels, yet each address that specific area's functions and goal. On the broadest level, there are state level plans. These are few and far between but appear to be created with a large investment of time, money and staff power, and they speak to broad national or state-level powers. Second, there are food plans at the local, municipal level. These plans exist for metropolitan areas that encompass many smaller cities but they have also been written for smaller towns that aren't metropolises. This is the level at which most food plans are created. I have located approximately 10 municipal level plans. Thirdly, there are regional food plans. Much in the same way that there are regional planning organizations who perform tasks for an area, so there are food plans created by these joint planning operations to address an area's specific food system. Regional planning organizations function similarly to county-wide governance. I have categorized county-level and regional-level together. There are approximately 14 plans at this scale, nine are written for the county and five are written for the region. There are similarities and differences between all of the food plans identified but the municipal level plans and the regional level plans are clearly similar in scope, vision and implementation.

Plan Evaluation

Food plans, as with other plans in municipal governance, seek to exist on a visionary level and also be put to use, pragmatically. Food plans intend to address the system of how communities access, produce, buy, and sell food. But how are cities and regions creating food plans that are both visionary and pragmatic? How do the food policy councils and planning commissions create plans that understand and address barriers and build upon strengths particular to a city or region? Of course, food plans can be created behind closed doors by a group of well-informed representative individuals. However, to use Rachel Pain's (2004) call to action, "PR (participatory research) is one answer to recent calls for more relevant, morally aware and nonhierarchical practice of social geography which engages with inequality to a greater degree" (2004, p. 652). Substitute urban planning for social geography, and it is clear that meaningful public participation is one way to begin to build trust, engage different marginalized groups within a community and begin a dialogue that can inform a plan.

Discussion and research in the planning field seeks to address the questions of why we evaluate plans. What do we hope to achieve by testing and evaluating existing plans? In the realm of comprehensive plans, much research attempts to answer this question. The simplest answer, put forth by Baer (1997), is to make better plans. Of course this begs the question about what better is and for whom, in what contexts. But the idea of a comprehensive plan, as with a food system plan, is to address needs within a community context, working from a fact base, and put forth visions for the future of the community and also practical methods to achieving these visions and goals. As Baer (1997) says, it is difficult to pinpoint what exactly a good plan is but "the plan remains one of the primary tools to influence future growth and development (Dalton 1989). Moreover, societal interest in the plan has intensified" (Baer, 1997, p. 329). Baer (1997)

is clear that reproducible evaluations are necessary, to eliminate “idiosyncratic” or biased evaluations (1997, p.332).

Pertinent to the convergence of sustainability, food systems and plans is Raymond J. Burby’s research on *Making Plans that Matter: Citizen involvement and Government Action* (2003). Burby (2003) shows that to make plans that are “good” and that matter, stakeholder involvement is crucial. “One cause of ineffective plans... is the fact that some of the issues planners worry about and the solutions they advocate lack publics who appreciate the problem and will work to see it solved” (2003, p.33). Although this language lays plan inadequacy at the feet of the stakeholders, it is certainly true that involving stakeholders in governmental actions (like plans) assures that the plans address actual issues important to the stakeholders. Burby (2003) further says that numerous planning scholars (Innes, Lindblom and Cohen) “...note that citizens possess ‘ordinary knowledge’ that can help ensure that policies proposed in plans reflect local conditions and values” (2003, p. 34). This begins to intersect with the Kloppenberg’s (2000) early sustainable food system research that maintained that sustainability of food systems solidifies when they become more emplaced or site-specific.

Involvement of stakeholders in municipal decision making is a contested practice and yet also accepted as a necessary practice. How stakeholder engagement is performed may encourage citizen understanding and buy-in, and it may encourage better implementation of plan strategies. However, the involvement process has a history of inadequacy and tokenism. Sherry Arnstein’s (1969) now famous “Ladder of Citizen Participation” heralded the advent of examining *how*

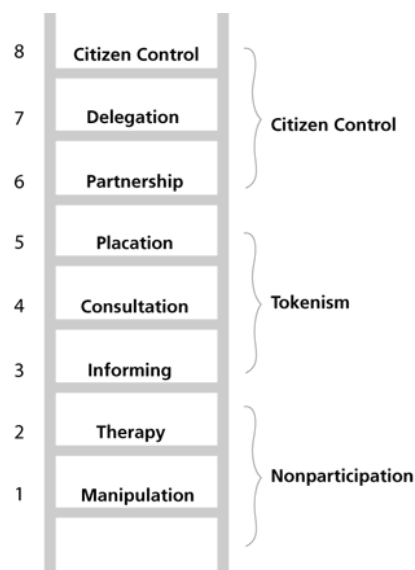


Figure 1 Arnstein's 1969 Ladder of Citizen Participation

planners include the public in their decision-making. Arnstein (1969) asserts that most citizen participation falls in the lower rungs, being merely a one-way monologue. Burby (2003) also notes that “the choices planners make in conducting public involvement process may also inadvertently stifle participation” (2003, p. 36). Even though Arnstein’s work emanated from civil rights struggles in the late 1960s, it is clear that placating or tokenistic public engagement still happens, though the arguments are perhaps subtler.

Citizen engagement in plan creation grows from the idea that citizens have rights “...to be informed, to be consulted and to have the opportunity to express their views on governmental decisions. They also stress the need for better representation of the interests of disadvantaged and powerless groups in governmental decision making” (Brody, Godschalk & Burby, 2003, p.246). As well, Brody, Godschalk and Burby (2003) argue that citizen engagement, throughout the planning process, “can generate trust, credibility and commitment regarding the implementation of policies and can build social capital” (2003, p.246).

Evaluation Criteria Methods

The evaluation of food plans can take many forms. I chose to evaluate the stated public participation language in the adopted plan. I chose not to attempt any evaluation of larger planning implementation or plan quality as it relates to the utility of the food plan because many of these plans are in their infancy.

| Evaluation Criteria | Source or Reasoning | Answer type |
|--|---|-------------|
| Is the public participation process addressed? y/n | Baseline | Nominal |
| Is there information included about how public engagement processes were used/ leveraged to create this plan? Y/N | <u>Arnstein</u> (1969) | Nominal |
| Were multiple groups of stakeholders included (Y/N) | Brody, <u>Godschalk</u> and Burby (2003, p.252), Burby (2003) | Nominal |
| Did citizen engagement happen throughout the planning process? | Brody, <u>Godschalk</u> and Burby (2003, p.250), Burby (2003) | Nominal |
| Were multiple engagement techniques used? | Brody, <u>Godschalk</u> and Burby (2003, p.252), Burby (2003) | Nominal |
| Are different types of data, many sources of data and public engagement processes leveraged to create a strong "fact base" to work from? | Baseline | Nominal |
| Is the process of citizen engagement clear and spelled out? | Baseline | Descriptive |
| How was citizen engagement managed? | Brody, <u>Godschalk</u> and Burby (2003) | Descriptive |
| length of time of the planning process | Best Practices | Descriptive |

Table 1 Evaluation Criteria, Reasoning, Data Type

- My first question is simply, is the public participation process addressed in this plan?
- Digging deeper into this, is there clear information about how the public engagement information was leveraged in this plan? I was seeking to understand whether these sites were addressing Arnstein's ideas that real citizen involvement is deeper and more advanced than "informing" or "consulting". Essentially, was the information gained from the public put to use in the plan and where/how was it used?
- Using Brody, Godschalk and Burby's 2003 case study findings, I next asked whether multiple groups of stakeholders were included in the public participation process.
- I then looked at when the citizen or public participation happened: did it happen throughout the process? Brody, Godschalk and Burby (2003) emphasize that "early participation injects community knowledge and expertise into the planning process when it is most needed, before policies are set in stone" (2003, p. 250).
- My next question: were multiple engagement techniques used? They also highlight that numerous techniques and different methods help planners to engage with different people from different communities and for different objectives.
- Finally, I returned to the roots of plan creation in Urban Planning. I asked if different *types* of data and *different sources* were leveraged to create a strong fact base upon which to create a plan. Municipalities must use facts to defend their choices and authentically answer community challenges. However, this question was also intended to get at whether the plan used both qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data, as participatory research, has the capacity to connect municipal policy and community-level needs.

I created a yes/no matrix for each scored question. A yes answer, meaning plan X did address this specific issue, was worth one point. A no answer, meaning plan X did not address this issue, was worth zero points. I ended up with 6 yes or no questions then three questions of a more qualitative or discursive nature. These three questions are more subjective; they may not necessarily add value to the public participation process, but they give insight into the specific plan. I asked if the process of citizen engagement was clear and spelled out. The rationale being that vaguely or casually addressing citizen participation in passing will result in muddy or unclear results. I also asked how the citizen engagement was managed. Brody, Godschalk and Burby (2003) emphasize administration as an element of participatory success. Finally, I noted the stated length of time the food plan creation process took. This is to inform future planners and help create best practices in food plan creation.

| Title of Plan | Prepared By | PP Score | Year Adopted |
|--|---|----------|--------------|
| Washington County Food System Plan | Oregon State University Extension Services, Washington County OR | 0 | 2013 |
| Bennington Food System Action Plan | Bennington Farm to Plate Council, Bennington Regional Commission | 1 | 2014 |
| Story County Local Food Planning Strategic Action Plan | Story County Planning and Zoning, Grow Story County Committee | 1 | 2010 |
| Multnomah Food Action Plan | Multnomah County Office of Sustainability | 1 | 2010 |
| Central Ohio Local Food Assessment and Plan | Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission | 1 | 2010 |
| Marion County Local Sustainable Food System Plan | Marion City/ County Regional Planning Commission | 2 | 2016 |
| Eating Here: Greater Philadelphia's Food System Plan | Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission | 2 | 2011 |
| New Haven Food Action Plan | New Haven Food Policy Council | 3 | 2015 |
| FoodWorks: A Vision to Improve NYC's Food System | The New York City Council | 3 | 2010 |
| Transforming the Oakland Food System: A Plan for Action | Oakland Food Policy Council | 4 | 2010 |
| Sonoma County Healthy and Sustainable Food Action Plan | Sonoma County Department of Health Services, Sonoma County Food System Alliance | 4 | 2011 |
| City of Seattle Food Action Plan | Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment | 4 | 2012 |
| Edible Community: The Healthy Damascus Food Plan | City of Damascus, Oregon Public Health Institute | 5 | 2013 |
| Rogue Valley Food System Vision & Action Plan | Rogue Valley Food System Council | 5 | 2013 |
| Planning for Santa Fe's Food Future: Querencia | Santa Fe Food Policy Council | 5 | 2014 |
| Delta Roots: The Mid-South Regional Food System Plan | East Arkansas Planning & Development District, Memphis-Shelby County Office of Sustainability | 5 | 2015 |
| Healthy, Fresh, Local Food: An Action Plan for Increasing Availability and Access in Beaufort County, NC | Mid-East Commission, Carolina Farm Stewardship Association | 6 | 2013 |
| Mendocino County Food Action Plan | Mendocino County Food Policy Council | 6 | 2014 |
| Las Cruces Urban Agriculture and Food Policy Plan: Growing Good in Las Cruces | Food Planning & Policy Coordinator La Semilla Food Center | 6 | 2015 |
| Douglas County, KS Food System Plan | Douglas County Food Policy Council | 6 | 2017 |
| Bridgeport, CT Food Action Plan | Bridgeport Food Policy Council | 6 | 2015 |
| Homegrown Minneapolis: Expanding the Local Foods Movement | Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support | 6 | 2014 |
| Santa Barbara County Food Action Plan | Santa Barbara County CA | 6 | 2016 |
| Sacramento Region Food System Action Plan | Valley Vision, Sacramento Region Community Foundation | 6 | 2015 |

Table 2 Matrix of Food Plans: Title, Preparer, Public Participation Score, Date Adopted

Evaluation Results

The public participation scores on all plans ranged from zero, a negative answer on all six categories, to six, a positive answer on all queries (see Table 2). As evident in the frequency table (see Table 3), twelve sites scored high (a 5 or 6) while the other half of the sites scored four and below. This simple look at scores tells us that it is well-accepted to include public participation practices in plan making. These high numbers indicate a commitment to include the public voice in the food plan. They may also indicate that sites that create food plans realize that stakeholder participation in the plan creation will increase engagement with and implementation of the plan. Burby (2003) agrees but adds that, “while public involvement is something that every planner is likely to view as beneficial in theory, a number of observers suggest that actual decisions planners make about participation can in fact stifle it” (Burby, 2003, p. 36). This is a possible reason that seven of 24 sites scored from two to four on the public participation score.

| Score | Frequency |
|--------------------|-----------|
| 0 | 1 |
| 1 | 4 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 2 |
| 4 | 3 |
| 5 | 4 |
| 6 | 8 |
| Grand Total | 24 |

Table 3 Public Participation Score and Frequency.

| Plan Site | Public Participation Score | Population | Year Adopted |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Beaufort County, NC | 6 | 47,000 | 2013 |
| Mendocino County , CA | 6 | 88,000 | 2014 |
| Las Cruces, NM | 6 | 101,000 | 2015 |
| Douglas County, KS | 6 | 114,000 | 2017 |
| Bridgeport, CT | 6 | 147,000 | 2014 |
| Minneapolis, MN | 6 | 400,000 | 2014 |
| Santa Barbara County, CA | 6 | 435,000 | 2016 |
| Sacramento Region, CA | 6 | 1,465,000 | 2015 |

Table 4 Top-Scoring Food Plan Sites

The top scoring sites, eight in number, who scored a perfect six on the criteria are listed in Table 4. They run the gamut from a small rural farming region in North Carolina (Beaufort County) to mid-size cities like Las Cruces, NM and Douglas County, KS (which includes Lawrence, KS) to large cities with extensive infrastructure (Minneapolis, MN) and Santa Barbara County, CA. The site plan with the highest population that scored a six on the evaluation criteria is the Sacramento Region (CA) plan. This plan and the Santa Barbara County plan (CA), both in California, represent places nationally that produce incredible amounts of food that is transported across the county to feed other places.

These eight sites differ in geographic location. One in the north (Minneapolis, MN), one on the southern seaboard (Beaufort County, NC), one urban site on the East coast (Bridgeport CT), the Midwestern “breadbasket” (Douglas County, KS), the desert southwest (Las Cruces, NM) and three from the temperate areas of California (Mendocino, Santa Barbara and Sacramento). They all differ in population, offering little generalization about food plan public participation and location size. One similarity, however, is possible. The plan creation dates are all more contemporary. The first food plans were adopted in 2010. But given the adoption dates and high public participation scores (Table 4), it is possible to say that in 2013 onward to 2017, public participation clearly has gained importance.

These plans in Table 4 were not all created in the same way. The Minneapolis MN plan, *Homegrown Minneapolis* (2012), is an interesting, unique food plan and the first chronologically to get a high public participation score (Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support, 2012). The plan authors define *Homegrown Minneapolis* (2012) as a guiding document for other sites- presenting its contents as a record of its own process. There are not traditional plan elements like goals, objectives and visions here. The plan (2012) says, “The Homegrown Minneapolis initiative did not initiate the local food movement in Minneapolis. Instead, it provided a forum for people who were already deeply engaged in food system efforts ... to contribute to the development and implementation of a shared, government-community vision” (Minneapolis Department of Health and Family, 2012, p. 14). It is instructive to evaluate this plan with the criteria set forth because even if it lacks traditional plan elements, *Homegrown Minneapolis* still sets the stage for food plans and encourages other sites through best practices put forth to evaluate and improve their food system. Because food plans are in their infancy, there is not one accepted way to plan for food yet and all contributions have lessons to share.

The scale of these eight high-scoring sites differ as well. Three plans are written at the county level. Two plans are written at a region level, usually a grouping based on similarities in production/ consumption or geographic barriers. Three plans are written at the city level (Minneapolis, Las Cruces and Bridgeport). This city-grouping seems to indicate the importance of the city within the state. In *Las Cruces Urban Agriculture and Food Policy Plan: Growing Good in Las Cruces* (2015), authors point out that Las Cruces is the second largest city in New Mexico. In *Bridgeport, CT Food Action Plan* (2015), the city clearly has unique struggles, being a heavily urbanized city on the East coast. Minneapolis, Bridgeport and Las Cruces all share a similar percent of their population below the poverty level. They range from 22% (Minneapolis) to 24% below poverty (Bridgeport and Las Cruces) according to American FactFinder 2016 data. While the level of poverty among the population may not be a contributing factor, it is the stated intent in these three plans to address food access, food equity and built environment barriers to food. This similarity in need, population in poverty, may contribute to similar focus in the plans.

Another similarity among the majority of high-scoring plans is that, excepting the Bridgeport plan (2015) and the Minneapolis plan (2014), they cite loss of farmland, their agricultural production or agricultural heritage as leading reasons for creation of their food plan. The tension, common among developing cities and all eight food plan sites, between sustaining farming heritage, keeping open land in and around cities, supporting sustainable farming practices AND supporting economic development, is the crux of sustainability. This tension is the reason why places create sustainable food plans, sustainability plans, urban agriculture plans and land use plans. This similarity among all eight plans suggests that agricultural heritage remains important, but endangered, as cities and counties develop. Santa Barbara County (2016) says it wishes to “future proof” the process of food from farm to plate. By creating a sustainable

food system, the Santa Barbara authors (2016) wish to “create well-nourished workers who are better able to support a vibrant food system, bringing more resources to the community” (Santa Barbara County CA, 2016, p. 4). This is one of only a couple plans that address the farm/food workers who maintain the food production side.

| Plan Site | Score | Population | Year Adopted |
|-------------------------------------|-------|------------|--------------|
| Washington County, OR | 0 | 556,000 | 2013 |
| Bennington, VT | 1 | 37,000 | 2014 |
| Story County, OH | 1 | 93,000 | 2010 |
| Multnomah County, OR | 1 | 770,000 | 2010 |
| Central Ohio | 1 | 1,605,000 | 2010 |
| Marion County, OH | 2 | 66,000 | 2016 |
| Philadelphia/Delaware Valley Region | 2 | 1,555,000 | 2010 |

Table 5 Low-Scoring Sites

Commonalities among low scoring sites, Table 5, seem to be either low population and therefore less monetary support for plan creation (Washington County OR, Bennington VT, Story County OH, Marion County OH), overly broad reach (Central Ohio) or among the first to be created (Multnomah County OR, Philadelphia PA). It is important to look at the geographic spread in the two early plans (2010), one for Multnomah county and one for the Philadelphia metropolis (which at once identifies itself as the city and surrounding areas of Philadelphia and also as the Delaware Valley region). They are from opposite ends of the country but both are considered “foodie” havens, include large population centers and have created visually appealing, well-researched plans that both gloss over stakeholder buy-in and public participation.

There is wording that indicates public opinion is included but offers no results, no data, no clear description of where it is included or what the information was.

The three plans from Ohio are sites that have a prominent commodity-based agricultural heritage. All three focus on expanding economic opportunities for citizens, enlarging local markets, addressing aging farmers and seem to skip the stakeholder processes. All three share a quality that these plans are not quite traditional plans. They do not follow planning principles necessarily. Both the Story County (2010) plan and the Marion County (2016) plan present issues and strategies, with a focus on supply chains and food security. The *Central Ohio Local Food Assessment and Plan* (2010) is information-heavy and full of ideas. This was also created in 2010, the “infancy” of food planning, so lacks some of the clarity of later plans. This plan attempts to cover a broad section of Ohio, including Columbus, so the ideas are hard to implement and there is not a clear “owner” for the goals and objectives collected.

The *Bennington Food System Action Plan* (2014) deserves a special mention. While it scores low on public participation, it is really a different sort of plan. Vermont is a unique state and has produced a statewide food system plan. The *Bennington Food System Action Plan* (2014) is intended to be a city-wide reflection of the statewide plan (Bennington Farm2Plate Council, 2014, p. 4). This city produced a food sector guide or plan, Farm2Plate, to address specific town-wide needs. The statewide planning process actually included a food summit in Bennington to gather community input and increase participation. The Farm2Plate initiative implied that its own process was unfunded to recreate community meetings, interviews and surveys. Clearly, this plan reinforces the understanding that food planning is developing and a contingent, not established, process. There is no one way to create a successful food plan.

Therefore, inclusion of these interesting, but not quite uniform, plans is instructive about the process.

Evaluation Discussion and Best Practices

The highest scoring group all definitively illustrate the entire process of citizen engagement, and then describe how the citizen engagement was utilized or informed the plan creation. *Healthy, Fresh, Local Food: An Action Plan for Increasing Availability and Access in Beaufort County, NC* (2013) was especially methodical in this, using community surveys to determine priority goals and then including a separate methodology section in the plan (Mid-East Commission & Carolina Farm Stewardship Assn, 2013, p. 5-7). This choice facilitates replication and also transparency. *Santa Barbara County Food Action Plan* (2016) is incredibly transparent, naming every working group member and every stakeholder interviewed. This inclusion, which lists the sector or interest group from which the stakeholder comes, elevates the public contribution by allowing readers to understand the broad range of contributions. This also makes clear to readers and stakeholders alike that their information was critical to the creation of the plans. Techniques like this recall Arnstien's exhortations to authentically work with the public, allowing them to identify community needs and barriers and processes to address them.

It is important to note that many high quality food plans did not score particularly well on the public participation criteria. Lower public participation scoring plans, like *Transforming the Oakland Food System: A Plan for Action* (2010), also clearly state how public participation information was used. Their score, a 4/6, is reflective of the fact that they did not use multiple engagement processes and used their FPC as the stakeholder body throughout the plan process. Very likely, this plan is still entirely useful for this city. But their less than perfect score reflects

the inadequate description of their community engagement process, not the inadequacy of the entire plan.

There is a trend that all higher scoring sites (12 plans in total, scoring 5 or 6), see Table 2, used a *designated body*, usually their FPC but not necessarily, to manage citizen engagement. Some sites used a consultant or partnered with a non-profit (Sacramento region), others used community chairs or leaders from different sectors (Minneapolis). Those that do not have a have an FPC, tend to have a clear steering committee, evident in regional plans like *Delta Roots* (2015), *Santa Barbara County Food Action Plan* (2016) and *Story County Local Food Planning Strategic Action Plan* (2010). It is a best practice among all of the higher scoring plans to have specific set-aside staff that devote uninterrupted time to the creation of the food plan. Without the expertise and focus of a steering committee or food policy council or consultant, the complexity of a sustainable food system plan cannot be accomplished.

The length of time to plan seems to remain consistently around one and a half to two years. Although some sites say that the plan formed in one year, there was always a previous systems assessment that remains uncouned in that planning time. The *Douglas County, KS Food System Plan* (2017) is indicative of the typical process. The county performed a 2012 county-wide food system assessment, created their Food Policy Council, received the call to create a plan in 2016, updated the food system assessment and, in summer 2017, adopted their food plan. The process to plan creation is not quick or simple. The reliance upon full system's assessment is crucial to the accuracy of the plan and the reliance upon community input also ensures the meaningfulness of the plan.

Food Plan Evaluation Conclusion

To draw conclusions from this evaluation of food plans, it bears stating again that food planning is young, and creating food system plans is in its infancy. There is no one way, as yet researched, to improve a whole system from the planning document. Food plans are an attempt to use a well-accepted tool to achieve some control and offer solutions to a system's issue. There is a wide variety of plans, from guiding documents to broad strokes at large-scale levels to intensely focused, data driven documents. However, it must be said that stakeholder participation is necessary to improve the sustainability of a document and to create a plan that accurately reflects the lived experiences and needs of the community. The ways that sites gathered citizen information have included community meetings, focus groups, interviews, surveys and citizen-led committees. The most successful plans' public participation schemes are well-documented, multi-pronged, clearly administered and integrated into the document in systematic, clear ways. These successful food plans, as evaluated, also clearly work from a fact base in order to respond to their site-specific needs, barriers, and assets. Lastly, the evaluation of food plans clearly showed that some plans integrated public participation throughout the whole planning process, a technique that allows stakeholders to see that their experiences guided the plan creation. While the outcomes of food planning are unfolding, citizen engagement remains necessary and critical to engage the public with the planning process, enhancing the sustainability of the plan into the future.

Chapter 4:

Introduction to Food Plan Creation: Participatory Engagements in Douglas County Kansas.

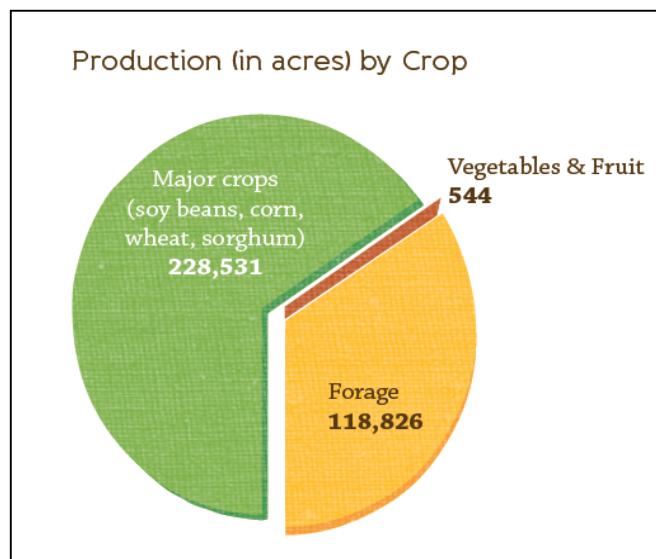


Figure 2 Production for Douglas County KS. From the Douglas County Food Systems Assessment (2012).

The city of Lawrence Kansas and Douglas county have worked with shared resources to address urban-rural food system issues since 2010, producing a complete county-wide food systems assessment in 2012. The city of Lawrence is surrounded by rich farmland with types 1 and 2 soils that grows predominately commodity crops, including some grazing land (Figure 2) (Web Soil Survey, 2017). However, there has always been a portion of the peri-urban and urban land used for specialty food crops. These specialty crops are destined for the local/regional market, including the county farmers' markets, community supported agriculture shares and local restaurants. The Lawrence Farmers Market is robust, entering its 40th year, with over 90 vendors. In the county, there are 2 other farmers' markets. The downtown Lawrence restaurants and the locally owned cooperative grocery store, The Community Mercantile, support local farm production by purchasing and creating modest markets for sales beyond the farmers' markets.

The Douglas County Food Policy Council was established by the county commission in 2012 with a mission to “identify the benefits, challenges, and opportunities for a successful, sustainable local food system in Douglas County” (Douglas County Food Policy Council, 2017, Welcome). The city and county began a process of engaging with its food system in 2012 with a county-wide food assessment. The county received a grant in 2014 to hire a food systems coordinator to work under the direction of the sustainability director, Eileen Horn. The county contracted out for a Food Hub Feasibility study which was successfully completed in 2014. In 2016, the Douglas County Sustainability Department was awarded over \$200,000 in grant funds (over \$400,000 with matching funds) to expand and oversee the Double Up Food Bucks program in Eastern Kansas. This is the farmers’ market program that allows SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) recipients to double their money on any food purchase at the farmers’ market (spend \$20 get \$40 worth of produce) (Wentling, 7/22/2016, LJWorld.com). In May of 2016, the city commission removed barriers to urban agriculture including adopting codes that allow for chickens, ducks, goats and sheep (City of Lawrence, Ordinance No. 9206, May 3, 2016). In this amendment and the supporting publications for public use, some residents will also be able to sell home-grown produce from stands on their own property (City of Lawrence, 2017, Urban Agriculture Publication). These laws encourage the use of urban land for agriculture and set the stage for expanded husbandry processes within the city. Between the formation and utilization of the DCFPC and the food system assessments, the policy atmosphere in Douglas County is supportive of small-scale food farmers and is attempting to address barriers to food access and expand its local sustainable food system.

In 2016, with the revision of the comprehensive plan (Horizon 2020) for the county, the county commission called for the creation of a food system plan, along with updating the food

system assessment from 2012. This food system assessment gathered information using surveys, leveraged secondary data (USDA, county-wide and state level data), and contracted out for a county-specific food desert map. The food system assessment is intended to give a broad systems-level policy review and provide the DCFPC, County/City Commission and Sustainability department with recommendations (Douglas County Food System Assessment Update 2017).



Figure 3 From Douglas County food system presentation of data resources, 2016

The food plan creation process began in January of 2016 and culminated with a written plan presented to and adopted by the county commission in June 2017. The plan creation so far has engaged the public in three different ways, using different methodologies, as shown in Figure 3. In August through October of 2016, the county developed a survey tool about the food system (Douglas County Kansas Food System Survey Tool, 2016). This survey was meant to reach a broad base of citizens in Lawrence and the County. As well, it was intended to illuminate participants' priorities among food system themes and understand their lived experience with

food. This survey was primarily web-based and accessed online, using the city/county website. However, a small number of citizens took paper surveys and those were entered manually. This survey reached over 450 people (n= 450) (Douglas County Food System Plan, 2017). However, the demographics reflected that most respondents were white, better-educated and fit within the median income category for the city of Lawrence. This clearly does not reflect the marginalized communities within the county or people who experience barriers to food access.

In July of 2016, the food system focus groups began. These focus groups had the stated intention of utilizing existing working-group relationships in the county and engaging these groups on a set of questions about the food system. The set up and questions were developed to create awareness of the food system itself and garner information, specific to each group, about their perceptions of assets, barriers, hopes, values, and policy possibilities. They included a number of health-based, workplace health, healthy kids' groups and the sustainability advisory board. There were also the farmer groups including an extension group, a conservation district group, a farm bureau group and a group of Lawrence specialty farmers that sell to markets in the county. There were social work groups tapped, including seniors, Native American student support groups, food pantry operators and food pantry clients (Douglas County Food System Plan, 2017).

Another engagement tool utilized by the county was the gathering of community stories with the Sunrise Project. The Sunrise project is a non-profit organization with the mission to connect the community with food production and healthy eating, using programs in schools to teach kids to garden and prepare food and undertake community-based gardening projects such as the Community Fruit Tree Project. This group's mission and outreach were seen as possible ways to understand how marginalized people might experience barriers when it came to food.

The Sunrise Project oversaw the hiring of eight community coordinators who are representative of marginalized and underrepresented groups in the city and county. These coordinators were trained in interview methods and other qualitative techniques and then tasked to use their community connections to hold group and individual interviews based around food system questions. This qualitative data, in the form of interviews or stories, has been gathered and analyzed. It has been used to inform the creation of goals and objectives for the food plan. As well, the community coordinators have chaired community forums to communicate their findings to the public. They have also participated with the DCFPC in working groups to guide the writing of goals, objectives and policies (Sunrise Project Blog, 2016).

As these community coordinators are trained in qualitative methods, engaged in their communities and familiar with the food system in Douglas County, I selected them to co-create a final piece of community engagement work within the local food system using the photovoice technique. In order to synthesize the broader creation of food plans nationally with the work happening on the local level, I undertook a community-based research project entitled *Experiencing Food: Influencing Food Policy*. I chose a technique or process called photovoice in order to understand lived experiences of participants. I chose a technique that combines documentary photography with critical captions, designed to engage policy makers and influence public policy. I chose this technique because it represents an intersection of Human Geography qualitative methods research and a public engagement process utilized in public health and urban planning community outreach. The technique is unique in that it is labor and time intensive, so it is infrequently used. It has not been used in food systems planning, to my knowledge, which presents a research question as to whether it is a useful food system planning tool or not. My

project addresses the utility of this technique and what knowledge was gained with its use, as well as recommendations for future use in food systems planning.

Chapter 5:

Photovoice in Practice

Photovoice is an engagement process that *Hunger Through My Lens* (2013), a photovoice case study and toolkit from Denver Colorado, calls “photography + social action = awareness/dialogue/change” (2013, p. 6). It involves participants photographing their own lives, creating critical dialogue around their photographs and sharing the photographs and narratives with the public and policy makers.

The photovoice technique proper springs from the public health arena. Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris (1997) began this as a combination of evidence-based storytelling with photography. They originally developed the process using the frameworks of critical consciousness (Friere), feminist theory and documentary photography. Critical consciousness, as adapted by public health researchers, means that people (the “subjects” themselves) are most qualified to identify issues that are meaningful in their lives and then pull out central themes through critical dialogue using visual images. In Friere’s critical consciousness work, he led the process and created the images himself. Photovoice shifts this process by putting the image-making in the hands of the participants.

The underpinning of feminist theory in photovoice acknowledges that most of the systems in place to engage community voices are biased to white, cis-gendered, male voices. This renders women and people of color, older people and differently-abled people invisible. In

photovoice, the camera is a tool that can be understood fairly easily and can provide insight into otherwise unseen parts of life. People who might be misrepresented or not represented are given the power to produce images of their lives. Wang and Burris (1997) put cameras into people's hands, "so that they may record and catalyze change in their communities, rather than stand as passive subjects of other people's intentions and images" (1997, p. 371). This reflects the tendency in documentary photography and even in academic fieldwork for the researcher or photographer to create images of a studied group that may not accurately reflect the self-image of the subject(s). As well, photovoice attempts to give the power of the image making to the participant, taking that person from subject to creator.

Photovoice, as used in human geography, acknowledges the unavoidable positionality and subjectivity of the researcher, as well as the shift of the subject group from objects to full co-creators of information. Kearns (2015) says that the power of this qualitative approach "allow(s) the consideration of human experience and emotion, potentially suspending conventional concerns about researcher bias and recognizing instead the relationship between the researcher and the people and places he or she seeks to study" (2015, p. 4). Human and cultural geographers are looking to activate photography, to take it from its historical position of uncritical descriptor to a tool for creating meaning. Gillian Rose (2007) says, "instead of thinking of photos as transparent windows that allow us to peer into places we would never otherwise see, some geographers are starting to think of photos more as prisms that refract what can be seen in quite particular ways" (2007, p. 151). Photovoice places the researcher into a position of "amplifier" instead of creator. Kearns (2015) classifies photovoice as creating secondary observations, where the researcher interprets the observations of others. The positionality of the researcher, far from

being a neutral observer, is acknowledged as “co-creating meaning through bringing her or his own perspectives and life experiences to their analysis and interpretation” (2015, p. 4).

The photovoice technique cuts across the disciplines of urban planning and human geography very specifically. In urban planning, this technique is grouped as participatory action research. It is frequently employed on a school-level to understand how children perceive barriers to walkability, healthy lifestyles, safety and food in their environments (Local Government Commission, 2013, p. 47). Urban planning has clearly embraced public participation as necessary and good for at least three decades, evidenced through planning literature. Halvorsen (2003) looks to authentic or high quality public participation as a possible way to gain community trust. Gil and Luchesi (1979) track the development of community engagement processes in Urban Planning as a direct result of the Civil Rights Movement, echoing Arnstien’s (1969) call for authentic community involvement. Pain (2004) places the current interest in participatory action research as rooted in community development work from the American south, dating back to the 1970s (2004, p. 653).

In human geography, this method has been put to use studying children’s geographies as well as emotional geographies of home (Mitchell, Kearns, Collins 2007). It has been utilized to connect city planners with the needs of the community. Pain (2004) states that, “One of the main benefits of PR perceived by social geographers is its ability to forefront the perspectives of marginalized groups and actively challenge social exclusion with them (Cahill, 2004; Chambers, 1997)” (Pain, 2004, p. 654). This directly corresponds to Wang and Burris’ stated use that the photovoice technique is a tool for marginalized groups to work toward policy change. Pain (2004) says that it is not only power imbalances that the participatory research addresses but “power and empowerment are central concepts of PR, both in attempt to minimize the ‘us and

them’ between academic researcher and participants and in reversing conventional assumptions about who own and benefits from research...” (Pain, 2004, p. 657).

Photovoice Research Project Methodology

My research goal is to utilize community knowledge to visualize food barriers and the food system in Lawrence and broader Douglas County, Kansas, expanding our current understanding or positions from which we experience food. The photovoice technique is ideally suited to this pursuit because it has addressed, historically, food related public health issues, as well as planning questions and human geography topics. The methodology and application of the photovoice technique is interestingly prescriptive. Because it is a community-based technique, there a number of non-profit public health organizations who utilize this technique to address social issues. *Hunger Free Colorado* produced a workshop tutorial in order to expand and encourage the use of this technique. I have taken their project paperwork and outline and modified it to fit my research goals, my study area and the community in which I am researching.

According to the *Hunger Through My Lens* (2013) toolkit, the participants should be from marginalized groups, those who experience discrimination or unequal access based on race, class, gender identity, religious or cultural beliefs, those who struggle with a basic need (like hunger), those who live with chronic diseases and more (2013, p. 15). The Community Coordinators for the Sunrise Project fit this descriptor and were a well-selected group who have remained activated and engaged with the project of gathering food systems data since summer 2016. There are seven members of this coordinator group that agreed to participate. They have

been previously trained in qualitative research methods, food system functions and community leadership, which are critical skills to this project.

The topic addressed in the project is, broadly, the local food system and, specifically, the barriers surrounding food in the coordinators' everyday lives. As they have assisted the creation of the Food System Plan for Douglas County Kansas, they are well informed about the role of policy in the food system. These coordinators give insight into the everyday experience of food in their lives, their homes and their communities. Their prompt for photography was co-created with the coordinators and myself and reads: Illustrate the issues, assets and experiences that your community faces when it comes to food.

Training 1

In order to undertake this research project, I set up two half-days (approximately 6 hours) training sessions with the coordinators at the Center for Design Research, a public space available to KU organizations for use, located on the west campus of the University of Kansas. The first session began with introductions among the coordinators and myself, as the facilitator. The *Hunger Through My Lens* (2013) toolkit calls this position an amplifier, rather than a researcher, for the voices of the participants. My role has been teaching, organizing and asking questions with emphasis put on trainings, communication, critical question skills and organization/ presentation of the final images. The first training session was a deep dive into the technique of photovoice, where photovoice came from and where it has been used previously. We then wrote and shared project goals. These included what each member hoped to learn and what changes they would like to see from the project. We decided as a group that we did not want to establish ground rules, as all members were comfortable and familiar with each other.

We did spend time addressing any fears or anxiety about the project in the community and the critique of other's work. This established working boundaries that all members agreed with.

One common anxiety with the coordinators had to do with the possible quality of photographs produced. In order to address the fact that no members of the group were professional photographers, I contracted with a local professional photographer, Ann Dean, to give a one-hour training that day with a special focus on phone cameras, as all participants agreed that they preferred to use the camera on their phones. The coordinators learned about digital photography on phones, settings and framing techniques. All expressed satisfaction with the training, as it added to their comfort and understanding of the technical aspects of photography.

Another main topic on this first training day was boundaries, ethics and safety. In order to orient the coordinators with the informed consent policy, we used a chart and discussed possible scenarios that might fall in each category, see Figure 4. We discussed the ethics of capturing people's faces, when it might be possible to capture an important moment but not include someone's face. Two of the coordinators work with populations struggling with food access. They both agreed that choosing not to include people's faces, risking humiliation or exposure of the subject, was a route they would take.

| Experiencing Food- When Do I Need Informed Consent? | | |
|--|--|---|
| Consent NOT NEEDED | Obtain VERBAL Consent | Obtain WRITTEN Consent |
| Non-recognizable individuals in public--faces and all other identifying features are obscured- (example: a picture at the park, of people from behind or at the back of church, backs of people sitting in rows) | All individuals in all settings when possible | Individuals whose faces can be recognized --in a public or private setting (example: A picture of a volunteer at a food bank) |
| Public figures in public (example: politicians at campaign launch; celebrities; governor cutting rope) | | Parents or guardians of children (under the age of 18) who appear in your photograph (example: a picture of your 4 year old niece) |
| Photos taken of public places, objects or environments without people in them or identifying information about private property (example: picture of the capitol building; picture of food) | | Individuals in any setting where personal, private information is exposed in the photo or documented in the corresponding caption (example: someone's home from the outside, can see street sign and street address) |

Possible Questions to ask myself about the food system, barriers to healthy food and assets in my community:

- What is it like to experience barriers to getting food in my community? How do I or my family experience this and how do other members of my community experience it?
- What in my life or community has helped me in getting by?
- What in my life or community has kept me from getting the food I need when I need it? (or what have you observed/ heard from others that has kept them from getting the kinds of food when they need it?)
- What do I want to tell other people about the food system in my community- how we access food, when we need it, where we get it, what kind of food?
- What are my hopes for the future? And what might help me get there?

Figure 4 Consent Table and Critical Questions for Coordinators

Finally, we spent time considering the issues specific to their neighborhoods, communities, families and daily lives as they intersected with the food system. The coordinators answered questions on paper, for their own notebook, about what barriers or assets they experience with food. They considered what struggles they or their community has experienced with food. I asked them to consider what techniques/ services or supports have helped their community get by. Then I asked them to envision a future for what the food system might look like. All of these questions led up to the group discussion of where each of them thought they would begin trying to get photographs. This critical question time, along with an open discussion, left the group energized to begin their project.

Participants originally were given *10 days* to take photographs of their food lives. When the 10 days was complete, the intention was for each coordinator and I to identify five (5)

favorite images. However, all participants indicated they needed more time to get photos. The actual time spent between trainings was three weeks; two weeks of that time was active photographing. The coordinators submitted their favorite images to a shared online folder and I created a slideshow with them.

Training 2

The second training began with a review of group anxieties and hopes. We discussed the photography process each experienced and how the project worked for the participants. I spent time covering the process of critique, as used in the visual arts, so that coordinators could engage with their fellows' work and their own work, critically questioning the images but remaining compassionate. We talked about how to engage someone's work without tearing it down, using questions like, "why did you include this subject in your photo?" or "What were you seeking to achieve with this part of your image?". Questions like this encouraged the participants to be honest and open, while also feeling like they could challenge the content of each other's work.

Name _____

Experiencing Food: Influencing Food Policy with the Photovoice Technique

- What do you see here?

- What is really happening here?

- How does this relate to our lives?

- Why does this situation or concern exist?

- What can we do about it (policy implications)?

Figure 5 Critical Questions to Facilitate Captions

Then, we began a slide show of each participant's work. The creator had the floor to discuss fears, successes, failures and elements critical to the photos. Most coordinators chose to let the group begin talking about what they saw in the photos. This process led to a dialogue between the photographer and the rest of the group. The coordinators were encouraging but also clear in their critiques of technical issues that might detract from the desired outcome. When talking about content, most critiques had to do with the fact that the idea wasn't as clear as it could be. Each coordinator had two very strong photos which I chose and presented to the group, giving my interpretation about content, intent and strengths.

Finally, the coordinators began the process of creating critical captions for the two photos they liked best. They did not, as a rule, choose the images that I had selected to show as their strongest image. Throughout this process, the coordinators showed independence in their subject choices, image choices and caption creation. They answered questions, shown in figure 5,

intended to facilitate caption creation. As they wrote their captions, I helped with their word choices, their focus, and encouraged them to think about the policy connections their work might have as well as the connection to the previous food plan data gathering. However, I refrained from putting too many restrictions on their captions, like length or critical thought, in order to maintain my position as amplifier not creator or researcher. We finished this training with images and captions and the coordinators prepared to meet together to display their photovoice project. The coordinators' captions vary in length and complexity. Some captions are very short and succinct, while others are two paragraphs and very complex. An important element of the process emerged at this point. Two coordinators could not come to the second training. In order to communicate as a whole and retain the group dynamic, I chose to hold a second Training 2. The two members attended, followed the same procedure but looked at their cohort's images and captions. This was a much different process because the group was so small (two members and myself), but I conveyed many conversational elements from the large group Training 2. However small, it yielded similar quality results and the two members did not feel like they missed out on the discussion of their cohorts.

Final Display of the Project and Outcomes

The final project of captions and photographs was displayed at the Lawrence Public Library from May 19, 2017 until mid-July 2017. Each image and a descriptive poster was hung in the main body of the library, on the walls that everyone must walk by in order to get library materials. In the photovoice project outcomes, the desired outcome of a project of this type is to change policy. At this point in time it is not possible to interpret whether this project has done that. The food plan itself has been presented to the County Commission, with this project mentioned as a supporting element of the plan. Two of three commissioners stated that they had

seen the work and thanked the coordinators for their efforts. The final plan was adopted in July of 2017. This plan went before the County Commission July 9 for approval and shortly after was approved by the City Commission. As both commissions have adopted it, it will become a guiding policy document for the future of Douglas County Kansas.

In order to assess whether this technique is valuable to future food system planning, it is necessary to look at some measure beyond policy changes. Instead, this project outline is intended to illuminate the process of understanding community experiences with the food system and open up the possibilities for the outcome. The coordinators are a unique group for a photovoice project, in that they are experts at community-level qualitative data gathering. They have already helped shape policy! While hanging this project at the library, I witnessed one of the participants greet a neighbor and explain the project thusly; “This is a photo documentary project intended to show Lawrence how food policy affects us”. This masterfully succinct summary is indicative of the group but also the outcome that is measurable here in *Experiencing Food*. The outcome for this research project is that photovoice creates, depicts and solidifies relationships that might not have been clear before. The photos created through this project have paired specific events (the coordinators’ experiences) directly with food policy (in their captions), as stated in the Douglas County Food System Plan (2017 draft). It is remarkable that community members know policy and the food system so well that they can take pictures in their lives to capture and share with the community the reality of food policy.

The Images and Captions

Robin S.

Trash in the Cash Crop

Where policy is needed:

The Douglas County Food System Plan Draft calls for limiting waste in our local food system.



Robin S.

Uptown Girls

Policy at work:

The City of Lawrence allows small livestock within city limits.



Betty P.

Stamp of Approval: Creating Year-Round, Expanded Growing Season When Using Greenhouses

You and I can eat local, healthy foods because of the dedicated, hard work of many urban and rural agricultural businesspeople and policy makers. Currently, the coordinated efforts are underway to strengthen, improve, foster and support efforts regarding food in our city.



Betty P.

Stretched Super Souper Thin

Many families are super souper tired, super souper low-income, super souper far from a super store and super souper hungry. A quick meal can be prepared by OPENING A CAN, one meal at a time, one day after another.



Connie F.

Inka Kola:

Q: How far will you travel for nostalgia?

A: 45 minutes one way.



Connie F.

*A classic free meal provided by the ECM,
with day-old bread donated by
Wheatfields.*



Cyara L.

Wasteful Scapegoat



Cyara L.

Tough Guy, Soft Egg



Owie T.

Seeds are the Start of Something More

These seeds are from my mother's farm in Arizona and are totally organic. These are the same type of corn that she has grown for decades.



Owie T.

NDN Taco



Rachael L

Combating the Disparities

Incorporating fresh cultural food from community gardens to aid in lowering the diabetes rates among Native Americans.



Rachael L

Ancestral Support



Chris D

"Recipes and Tips for Healthy, Thrifty Meals"

Tuesday's menu for a single SNAP beneficiary based upon the meal plans and recipes developed and evaluated by Pennsylvania State University under contract with the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. It's based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 1995 and the Food Guide Pyramid. Note: If you are a vegetarian, they recommend a cheesy baked potato. No alternatives.



Chris D

A Community-Wide Collaboration

The Lutheran Campus Ministries (LCM) opens a food pantry, and provides a low-cost meal every Thursday through a collaboration with Ramen Bowls and a variety of local farmers. Every week, students and members of the community are welcome to a good meal with fresh produce, and every week they fill the room. It only takes \$2 per person to keep the ramen flowing, but that only has the program breaking even. Both the food pantry and the meal program struggle with awareness, the stigma associated with accepting charity, and their current inability to expand the program. "We're very fortunate to have the kind of support we have," Sean said of their collaboration with Ramen Bowls, "but we want to do more for the community." They are in the process of a campus wide fundraising competition to do just that.



Project Timeline

- Preliminary presentation to Sunrise Project and Health Department: *approved 11/9/2016*
- Presentation of project and proposed sample group to thesis advisor: *Chris Brown*
approved sample selection December 2016
- IRB process: *Approved January 25, 2017*
- The Sunrise Project directors approved payment of the coordinators for all work associated with *Experiencing Food* project.
- Coordinators were contacted and solicited by email and in person for the project. *Began January 28, 2017*
- Project Training 1: February 26, 2017
- Project Training 2: April 7, 2017
- Display of final project: May 19- July 2017.
- Food Plan adoption July 9, 2017 (County Commission), July 12 (City Commission)

Photovoice Recommendations

The initial research questions about the photovoice project asked whether this technique held value for other cities/ regions who might be creating food system plans. In order to approach a conclusion to this question, I look to the specifics of the training process and the participants first. There are a number of factors that supported the success of the trainings and the participants. The training process was lengthy and labor intensive for all involved. It required days of commitment and preparation on the part of the researcher and the participants. It is labor and time intensive. I, as the coordinator/ researcher, worked to secure funding for the

coordinators as well as food during the trainings. It was an important element, taken from the *Hunger Through My Lens* (2013) project, to give the coordinators compensation for their time. Because they were already employees of the Sunrise Project and funded through the Lawrence Douglas County Health Department, funding was available. In another community setting, this would not likely be so simple.

The identified participants, the Community Coordinators, are an exceptional group of individuals. Not only because of their unique perspectives, coming from Native American, African American, Southeast Asian, South American and senior communities, but also because of their unique training and positionality. These seven individuals have received intensive training that would not be available in most communities evaluating the photovoice technique for use in their data gathering process. I do not believe that their training had a negative impact on their project outcomes, rather an exceptional one. However, they already were so well acquainted with food policy that they came in as exceptional experts rather than the “everyman” who has little specific understanding about food system workings and policy. They acknowledged themselves that they felt like experts by the time they got to the undertaking of *Experiencing Food*. I believe they would ultimately work out fine with untrained participants. However, I expect that the researcher would be depended upon more and the researcher’s positionality, as both amplifier and project leader, would become highlighted and more challenging. These are important elements to consider when navigating this type of project in a municipal or food system setting. I would recommend that the project coordinator receive training in order to understand both the theories and the realities of this sort of project.

A caveat about this project involves when and how to utilize it, based on reflections from planning staff and community partners. Upon discussing this project with the Sunrise directors

and the Food System Coordinator, it became clear that undertaking this project FIRST might have been more illuminating for the community and the coordinators. This project, with its visuality and the relative ease with which it can be done, may have served as a vehicle to heighten community interest in the planning process as well as getting the newly-hired coordinators versant with barriers in their own communities. Two coordinators in the trainings mentioned going back to their interviewees to ask permission to take photos. This technique might have allowed an interview and photography session to happen simultaneously. I initiated the project after the bulk of research had been completed on the Lawrence Douglas County Food System Plan. The participants were eager to participate because they believed the process would prime the community for the plan adoption. I agree that an early implementation of this project in the system planning process may prove to engage even more community members early-on. As well, I suggest this project might be best performed twice, both to initiate the community planning process and at the end of the project to document changes. With two sets of photos and captions and two bodies of work to compare, it might prove educational about the growth of the participants, the community and might reflect some outcomes that are impossible to see in the single use of the photovoice technique.

There is a question of whether this technique really does enlarge the participants critical understanding of the world and the systems under which they live. It is arguable that the answer to this question is no. There is a marked lack of direction or tangible instruction as to how to critically challenge participants. In the the *Hunger through My Lens* process, this critical questioning and caption-creating period are unstructured. Originally participants were supposed to ask themselves questions on a worksheet. None of my participants wanted to do this. So we agreed to share the quote creation process around the table. I found myself struggling to remain

an amplifier and instead became more of a teacher. I did maintain a Socratic questioning stance, not answering their questions but asking them to think more deeply by asking “what do you think?” or “why is that, in your experience?”. Given the murky quality to this part of the process, it seems very apt to “fail”, that is not achieve Friere’s ends of a critical awakening to systemic inequities. Therefore, I highly recommend that the researcher and amplifier examine this part of the process and be prepared to revise, edit and recreate the critical questioning process for the participants.

It is also arguable, though, that the whole process in my research project did raise the critical consciousness of my participants. Although I surely do not possess a yardstick to measure their critical growth, I can relate a few experiences that seem to indicate changes and shifts. Firstly, participants did not see the connections between their own photographs. One of the most interesting elements of this research process for me was looking at all of the images produced and turned in by the participants and then seeing underlying connections. I showed all of the submitted photos as the beginning of the second training, after the initial check in. I told them that I found, with each of their work, a special thread through at least two of the images. It was remarkable that in each participant’s work, two images seemed to speak or go together to illuminate the other. Especially evident in Robin S’s two images, she did not initially see these as connected. But the connection when I showed them side by side, became clear. She then created a critical caption of each that are two distinct sides of the policy coin. This was revelatory for her, the other participants and me.

Another example of critical growth came in the roundtable discussion of images. As a preparation for this part of the training, I used my extensive experience in art and design critique to prepare them to constructively talk about other’s work. I encouraged no flat statements of like

or dislike, instead insisting on an “I (dis)like xxx because of xxx” phrasing. This element of critique provides the creator with a way using the critique instead of taking it personally. It is neither a personal insult or personal achievement that someone else dislikes or likes something in the work. Instead of the feared negative critique, participants were constructive with each other and began to see their own work much more broadly than they had before. Cyra L’s image of the bare-backed man cooking an egg was a favorite image. But no one was really saying why it was a favorite. After some questions by me (Who is this person? What is he making?), it became clear that she was drawn to his culturally-specific tattoos and his seeming toughness counterbalanced by the subtle softness of the image. This person is her father. He is making her a runny egg, just the way she likes it. I enjoy this image especially because of the contrasting warmth, his skin color that corresponds with the color of the wood cabinets, and coolness of the black hard edged microwave and stove. As well, his bulk takes up the majority of the frame but there is little snippet of soft white egg peaking out at the bottom. These contrasts personalize, soften and complicate this image, addressing the quiet and personal nature of food. This discussion seemed to expand Cyra’s understanding of her own image.

Based on the research I have completed for *Experiencing Food: Influencing Food Policy*, I recommend this technique to communities looking to create sustainable food system change and to heighten community awareness and understanding of the planning process. It is important to understand that this process is based upon a pre-existing understanding of barriers- *Hunger Through My Lens* addressed hunger, Wang and Burris addressed public health issues, planners addressed barriers to safe walking. If it is not clear there is a problem, this is not likely going to produce enough evidence either way to reach a conclusion. As well, it is clear to me that there must be a community ready to be engaged in the problem. If there is no interest, audience or

knowledge of an issue, there will not be an audience and certainly no policy makers to convince or engage. The stated outcome, according to Wang and Burris (1997) and *Hunger through My Lens* (2013), is policy change that reflects the participants lived realities. If there are no policies in development, community partners or interest in the subject, then the community is not ready for a photovoice project.

I believe this technique is useful for illuminating systemic issues that marginalized or underrepresented communities may face. This photovoice project could successfully illuminate barriers in a transportation system in a city/ county. This technique might prove valuable to understanding the barriers to affordable housing in a specific area. As well, it is of utmost importance to select participants who will complete the process in order to get to the final policy-change outcome. Peoples experiencing systemic poverty, hunger, health issues and food insecurity will be hard pressed to complete this project unless there is compensation. This project is intended to illuminate lived experiences and educate all participants and the community audience. Budget accordingly and work towards grant funding preemptively, rather than expecting good results with no compensation. It is important to remember that the researcher/facilitator must not occupy a position of authority only. Instead, the researcher must be listening as well as talking and must approach this process not as the expert but as an amplifier for the participants. My own experience supports the importance of being well-informed but asking probing questions, rather than attempting to educate the participants. The photovoice technique is labor-intensive and yet simple. The process is prescribed but well thought out, resulting in images that describe food policy barriers and opportunities in the community. I recommend careful consideration of the critical caption section of the trainings, shaping the process to fit the subject and the participants. In order to craft meaningful captions

that question current policy, participants must be informed and thoughtful about change.

However, I recommend this process to initiate community interest and illuminate underrepresented communities' experiences.

Community planning literature says that increased public involvement results in outcomes that are reflective of the lived experiences of community members. Participation Tools for Better Community Planning (2013) states that the public participation can, among other things, "help people understand project tradeoffs" and "enhance trust in local government" (Local Government Commission, 2013, p. 2). These two outcomes were clearly furthered with the photovoice project. The photovoice technique broadened the participants understanding of what food policy looks like in their neighborhoods by giving them roundtable time to discuss policy, as well as time to ask questions about what policy change might look like. Connie F. brought up anxieties she had about her community during the initial policy discussion time. She mentioned that many of her subjects were Latino and undocumented. Per the current federal administration policies, no undocumented individuals may work on or appear to influence policies in our country. How, she wondered, could she assure people that her photos were useful and also protect their safety? This question triggered discussion about anonymity in the photographs. Ultimately, the notion of tradeoffs or imperfect policy shifts, rather than huge policy change, was settled on by the group as an outcome they could accept. I was personally very pleased to see every single participant show up at the County Commission meeting of June 21st to support the presentation of the completed plan to the commission, receiving public applause and commission congratulations for their contribution to the plan. This clearly was a coup in community engagement. These individuals felt empowered and understood exactly

where their experiences were reflected in the policy document. I hope and believe it inspired deeper trust in the public process in local government.

Finally, I see this project as a success because our community feedback was resolutely positive, giving credence to my position that this project has been successful and photovoice a useful technique in food system planning. The public library staff and patrons enjoyed the quality of the work and the clear messages, as well as the images of local experiences. The staff even asked for the presentation to remain up an extra month because of the important content that dovetailed with other community photos up on display. The Lawrence Douglas County Health Department, undertaking a parallel similar project on public health issues, expressed its appreciation for the content and asked for guidance on their own project based on our successes. County commissioners indicated their support of the plan by mentioning *Experiencing Food* during the June 21st commission meeting. Commissioner Thellman stated that food system planning countywide was bolstered by the public display of these food system photographs. As well, I have found that these photos are engaging across boundaries. Where many academic and university projects might raise barriers for community members, this project connected across disciplines and boundaries. I received support from multi-disciplinary curators at the Spencer Museum of Art, interest and support from foodies, chefs and public health workers too.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Food is the starting point for many settlements and a shared necessity among humans. But the way settlements have shifted in American culture, from early subsistence farming to

centralized urban settlements, leads to a complex food system affected by and affecting social, environmental and economic spheres. Sustainability has come to the fore as a way to address a system that has left many undernourished, overfed, underpaid and food insecure and is environmentally degrading. To conclude the arguments made in this project is to acknowledge a fractured food system that reflects systemic inequalities and is anything but direct or simple. Responses to the complex insufficiency include increased food systems assessment and planning, urban design and placemaking, food research including alternative/ urban food production and distribution, public health, and increased community-based participatory research projects. Those differing lenses address food systems in different ways, from different points of reference and from different disciplines.

In Urban Planning, sustainability and food were slow to rise to the surface, as food planning has only become an imperative in the last 15 years. For most of the last century, as people urbanized, the food system was largely left to the commercial sector. Grocery outlets, food packaging and food processing companies largely determined what was available to buy and where one could buy. As cities have expanded, farming and farmland has contracted into peri-urban areas, becoming targeted for suburban development. With the knowledge of changing climates and food insecurity, sustainability has surfaced as a meaningful response to this farmland and eating crisis that moves beyond the field of Urban Planning.

Sustainability has been in the conversation in the realms of geography, sociology, agricultural science and public health far longer. Geographers, like Kates (2000) and Marsden (2012), and sustainability researchers like Kloppenburg (2000), find that placing or requiring sustainability to become more site-specific enhances the meaning of the term by more directly addressing the lived experiences in one specific place. This notion that sustainability is enhanced

when it is directly rooted to place forms a bridge to sustainable food system development.

Hinrichs (2010) and Hodgson (2012), sociologist and urban planner respectively, remind us that food is a constructive entry to sustainability because it enjoins the economic, environmental and social elements.

But the markers of a sustainable food system are hard to pin down, emerging and evolving as the understanding of food systems develop. One new tool to address sustainability in food systems is the food action plan or food system plan. Using the comprehensive plan as a pattern for visioning and community engagement, food system plans are tools to plan for food system development on a local and regional scale. This tool is emergent nationally, with only 24 stand-alone local or regional plans adopted. However, analysis of the plans offers insight into commonalities. I have chosen the lens of community engagement or public participation to begin to evaluate plans. As Burby (2003) points out, “stakeholder involvement and the strength of plans are related and ...in combination they affect the degree to which plans are implemented” (Burby, 2003, p. 34). Public participation is invaluable to urban planning because plans have meaning only if community members and policy makers understand the plan as a tool for change, a guideline for future development and a document that reflects the lived experiences of the community. Public participation enhances sustainability because it ensures that a sustainability initiative includes the local, lived experiences. Therefore, evaluating of food plans based on their community and public participation processes is an evaluation of where sustainability lies in food system planning.

Nationally, food plans are gaining popularity but currently only 24 have been adopted so far (on the municipal and regional scales). These plan evaluations reflected that most sites, at least half, included some measures of public participation. This number indicates that community

engagement and inclusion of the public voice is a well-respected method of plan creation. However, the way sites chose to use the public participation information was not so uniform or clear. One element of my evaluation asked whether sites included public information at multiple stages. Many sites who mention gathering public information to create their plan, simply did not reflect how they used the information or include the community in multiple ways along the path to a plan. Brody, Godschalk and Burby (2003) emphasize that multiple interactions are necessary to authentically capture public interest and qualitative data. The first food plans in the evaluation were created in 2010 and the most current plan was created and adopted in 2017. The more contemporary plans (2014-2017) include more clear and more thorough public participation. Early food plans mention the public voice or indicate that the public was consulted but do not show how, to what extent or with what tools the public gave input.

In order to understand food system planning and sustainability, I began working with Douglas County as they created their Douglas County Food System Plan (2017). The County has a demonstrated history of food system engagement, begun with a Food Policy Council and Food System Assessment in 2012. The process in Douglas County for the creation of a Food System Plan began in 2016 when the City and County Commissions enjoined the Sustainability Department and the Food Policy Council to address food system development, in concert with the update of the City/ County comprehensive plan (Horizon 2020). I participated in the process of capturing qualitative data through multiple venues, fora, meetings, interviews, surveys throughout the summer and fall of 2016. This process shone a light on the importance of community voice in plan development.

I began my own research project in Winter 2017 to take the process farther and evaluate a method of community engagement called photovoice. My project, entitled *Experiencing Food:*

Influencing Food Policy, used the participatory process, photovoice, to gather community data with documentary photography and critical captions, using community members themselves as researchers. In Douglas County, the food planning process had engaged a group of community members from underserved community to gather qualitative data to inform the plan since spring 2016. I utilized this same group of Community Coordinators to participate in my photovoice project January- March of 2017. The resulting images show a familiarity with food policy and food systems unique to my research group. More broadly, the images and captions, and the participants themselves, reflect more community engagement and enhanced vocabularies to describe food in their lives. I see the project as a success because of the community reception- the public library asked to keep the project displayed four weeks longer because of the positive feedback from patrons and the synergy of so many food systems activities during the months of May- July. As well, the coordinators themselves reflected positive shifts in critical thought during the training and critique periods. They gained insight into policy-making and seemed to gain a nuanced understanding of how policies might shift.

I deem the photovoice technique incredibly useful within certain parameters. The technique is prescribed and instructive, allowing many different groups to utilize it and have meaningful results. It is necessary to have a budget for this project to be successful- inclusion of marginalized community members with no recompense will, likely, not work. It is necessary, in my estimation based on my photovoice project, to have a ‘fertile field’. If the community is engaged with the larger project, be it hunger, food systems, public health, this technique has more likelihood of being successful. This project requires time- it should not be rushed or limited. More time will likely equal better results and MORE engagement from the participants and the community. Finally, I believe that in order to get hearty critical engagement, the basis of

the technique established by Wang and Burris (1997), the project coordinator or researcher must have full understanding of the issues facing the participants, the policies in place and be ready to ask questions but not overshadow the participants.

In the end, it is clear that food systems will be enhanced by increasing public engagement; sustainability will be enhanced by increased public engagement. Photovoice is one technique to produce a conversation, at the community level, about systems change or barriers experienced by the community. Food remains an important site for the conversation on sustainability because it touches our social/ cultural lives, our environment and our economic realities. In an ideal food planning process, it has become clear that the presence of a food policy council is very important, even critical. Wayne Roberts (2012) notes the FPC (he was speaking of Toronto especially) as one of the most accountable and engaged bodies in the city. The food policy council was present in over half of the sites that adopted Food System Plans. In some sites, like Oakland, the Food Policy Council was understood to represent the community for the creation of the plan.

I have been asked how cities and regions might avoid inadequate public engagement processes or how make sure that the community engagement is authentic. While there is no one answer, my first and best answer is to create a FPC that represents all of the sectors that need to be at the table. This table is inevitably big and perhaps unwieldy. My answer comes from my experiences with the Douglas County Food Policy Council. It is clear to many Lawrence Kansas residents that the city is unique, it's a food-centric hub in the middle of commodity crops and prairie landscapes. I consider this town valuable and unique on many fronts, to have a quarter-century old farmers' market, established specialty farmers, intensive municipal support of small-scale agriculture in the Common Ground Program, city/county support for large scale farmers,

thriving local restaurants that use local food, engaged community members representing many food cultures and a Food Policy Council that seeks members from each of these groups and more. One of the most interesting facts about the Douglas County Food Policy Council is the multitude of voices, representing young and old, institutions and small businesses, rural and urban needs, Native American voices, retailers and restaurateurs, commodity farmers and specialty growers, the local health food store and the chain grocery store, public health and diverse cultures. The process is necessarily not simple or smooth. But the process is in place and it asks the question, who is not at the table? Whose questions do we need to hear? This entire process is one of the protections of the public voice present here in Lawrence KS, as well as in many of the sites that created food system plans. An unlooked-for finding of this thesis is that I believe a Food Policy Council is critical to those sites seeking to begin the conversation around food in their communities.

This thesis is the result of many intersecting experiences and ways of learning. This topic, sustainable food systems planning, and the research project, *Experiencing Food: Influencing Food Policy*, come directly from the overlapping techniques taught in the joint Urban Planning and Geography degree program. At times, I could not see the value of one or the other program to my final goals. But the contested notions of sustainability, equity and social justice lie at the heart of both programs of study I undertook, Sustainable Land Use and Human Geography. The investigation of food planning and public engagement tools shines a light at the very real points of intersection that define sustainable projects. Sustainable food systems will call upon our ability to think laterally, utilizing tools outside of narrow disciplinary walls, and call upon community partners of all kinds to achieve forward movement. The process of photovoice and community-engaged research is critical to future planning discussions. Whether or not

photovoice itself is an ideal tool to use at all planning junctures is not really the question. Rather, the value of the research project comes from the engagement of different and varied community members who more fully illuminate un(der)seen elements of a large overarching system. My own commitment to community engagement has grown in ways I did not imagine. No longer centered on my own experience as a litmus test for the value of a project or policy, I believe creative methods of community engagement and public participation are critical to sustainability. I am grateful for the opportunity to utilize the qualitative methods and deep subjective inquiry I learned from my Human Geography courses, as well as the analytical and quantitative analysis taught to me in my Urban Planning courses. This joint master's program has proven critical to deepening my commitment to sustainable planning and community engagement. My hope is that my project helped push the subject of food, using the lens of sustainability, onto the municipal agenda and raise interest in the subject within the two departments as well.

Future Study

I believe that with the findings in place from my evaluation of food plans, further evaluations of the plan itself and the implementation process is necessary. It is important to follow comprehensive planning evaluation methods and begin the process of determining whether a traditional plan set up with goals, objectives and policies is the most useful organization, given the broad array of agendas that food system plans reflect (e.g. urban agriculture, farmland/ soil/ water conservation, food production at various scales, specialty crops and commodity crop production, emergency and community food availability, etc.). It would be helpful to this research question to compare sustainability plans, transportation system plans and the like to food system plans. Another question from the plan evaluation is at what scale do food plans become most effective? It appears that local, city and county plans work well because of

shared markets, the production scale, shared geographic boundaries and similar needs. But a thorough evaluation is warranted.

I believe another interesting question for further study is about the potential for success in food system planning. Based on the discussions in this paper and the experiences in Douglas County of the food system planning process, it appears that willing community partners indicate opportunities for food system planning success and plan implementation. I believe that community partners are critical to creating or indicating a fertile field in which change can happen. But, with no research on this topic, I cannot know the extent to which this is necessary for food system change. Essentially, in Urban Planning, researchers have always sought to benchmark the success or failure of plan implementation. I suggest that identifying and evaluating community partnerships is a way to indicate potential implementation strategies and successes in food system planning. Food plans need to be community-based and address direct community need, as the work has shown. The next steps will be identifying paths to successful community implementation in order to enact meaningful change. In order to protect changes and encourage policies that reflect all partners in a community food system, I encourage further study on food policy councils nationally. This is a growing trend and a representative community body that ensures meaningful questions are asked and good answers are found. I encourage future research on the quality of such community-based councils and evaluation of methods, to determine best practices for other food policy councils across the nation.

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